



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
www.orthodoxbutler.org

ADDRESS: 400 S. Sixth Avenue, Butler, PA 16001

PASTOR: Rev. Bogdan Gabriel Bucur

Contact: 724.287.6893; 412.390.8208 (priest); frbogdan@orthodoxbutler.org

BEGINNING OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR

1 September 2019

Tone 2 / Eothinon II— *Righteous Joshua the Son of Nun (16th c. B.C.). St. Simeon the Stylite (ca. 428). Martyr Aithalas of Persia (380). Holy Forty Women Martyrs and Martyr Ammon the Deacon, their teacher, at Heraclea in Thrace (4th c.). Martyrs Callista and her brothers, at Nicomedia (309).*

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High! Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! (R.:) Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and has girt Himself! (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! For He established the world which shall not be shaken! (R.:) Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ!
Save us, O Son of God Who art risen from the dead, as we sing to Thee: Alleluia!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 2): When Thou didst submit Thyself unto death, O Thou deathless and immortal One, then Thou didst destroy hell with Thy Godly power. And when Thou didst raise the dead from beneath the earth, all the powers of heaven did cry aloud unto Thee: O Christ, Thou giver of life, glory to Thee!

TROPARION FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH YEAR (Tone 2): O Maker of all creation, Who hast established the times and the seasons in Thine own power: Bless the crown of this year with Thy goodness, O Lord, and keep our rulers and Thy flock in peace, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, and save us.

TROPARION OF SAINT SYMEON THE STYLITE (Tone 1): Thou becamest a pillar of patience and didst emulate the forefathers, O righteous one: Job in his sufferings, Joseph in temptations, and the life of the

bodiless angels while still in the body. O Symeon, our righteous Father, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved!

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW CHURCH YEAR (Tone 4): O God of all, Thou Who hast made all the ages, * O Sovereign Lord, truly transcendent in essence, * bestow Thy grace and blessing on the year to come; * and, O Most Compassionate, * in Thine infinite mercy * save all them that worship Thee, * Who alone art our Master, * and that with fear, O Savior, cry to Thee: * Grant us all a fruitful and godly year.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*Prokeimenon: Great is our Lord, and great is His strength.
Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good!*

The Reading is from St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy

(1 Tim 2:1-7) **Timothy, my son: I ask, first of all, that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone—for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our Savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and the human race: Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all. This was the testimony at the proper time. For this I was appointed preacher and apostle (I am speaking the truth, I am not lying!), teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**

In the Divine Liturgy we pray "for the president, for all civil authorities, and for the armed forces." This has been going on since the first generation of Christians, following the rule set by the Holy Apostle Paul: **prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings are to be offered for kings and for all in authority.** Under more or less "normal" circumstances, we are not disturbed by Saint Paul's rule. But it is surely a challenge to pray for leaders who are bent on exterminating you, your family, and your community. Christians have often found themselves in such situations: think of Christians under the tyrannical Nazi and Communist dictatorships, or under Middle Eastern despots today, or under fanatical Islamist regimes possibly in the future.

Saint Paul knew well that the Emperor of Rome was not just "someone in power" but someone who claimed a quasi-divine status, and whose policies—as under Emperor Nero—brought Christians much suffering and death. Still, he insists on praying for the authorities. The Apostle is simply applying the Lord's command ("love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you," Mat 5:44) to the setting of a larger community that has to find a way of surviving in a hostile social and political environment. There is also something to be said for the idea that the Church's mission is not to preach for or against a specific political, social, and economic model, not to call for revolution or restoration, but to plant the Gospel seed within any heart and house and society that accepts it. The current patriarch of Antioch, John X, who shepherds his flock in war-torn Syria and Lebanon, has some wise and true words on this point: **"In order for Christians to accomplish their mission in society, they need first to accept and love this society—even if it contains dangerous trends, even if it is corrupt and evil, and even if its values conflict with our Christian conscience."**

At the root of this attitude is the revelation of the Gospel, the Good News, for all mankind: for good and bad people, the same holds true: **Christ Jesus gave himself as ransom for all and God wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.** And who could have known better that even enemies of

Christ and Christians have a chance to turn around than Paul himself—this zealous persecutor of the Church whom God's mercy appointed preacher and apostle, teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth?

The calendar of the Orthodox Church begins a new year today. Despite the wars and rumors of wars, the fears, and the countless occasions to be scandalized, let us heed the advice of the great Apostle Paul and pray for everyone, knowing that God Himself pleads with each and everyone of His children to accept salvation.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

(Luke 4:16-22) At that time, Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and He went to the synagogue, as His custom was, on the Sabbath day. And He stood up to read; and there was given to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor and to heal the broken hearted. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And Jesus closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.

A pious tradition holds that the Lord began preaching the good news of His mission on September 1st, in Nazareth, as he was attending the Shabbat worship. This is why the assigned reading for today is Luke 4:16-22. The Gospel shows Him in the city where he had grown up, where everyone knew him well as the son of the carpenter, the city where he used to go to synagogue on Saturdays. Indeed, the first note to be made here is that Jesus went to the synagogue *as was his custom, on the Sabbath day*. Moreover, on that Saturday he was even asked to read publicly from the Holy Scriptures.

It seems, then, that there is nothing new, no earth-shattering revelation, happening on that Sabbath in the Nazareth synagogue. Except that after reading a passage from the Book of Isaiah, the Lord declares: **He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."**

What does it mean to say that *Scripture was fulfilled*? It means that the meaning of the words that Jesus has just finished reading ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me ... He has sent Me ..." etc), has now been revealed. Those words were cloaked in mystery, and readers would ask themselves: Who is it that Isaiah the prophet is talking about? Who is this Spirit-bearer? Who is the one "sent" by God to heal, to liberate, and to proclaim the presence of God? Well, now Christ states that the prophecy is about Him: the questions have found their answer, the prophecy has been fulfilled—this day, right now, before your very eyes!

And what exactly does Jesus claim to be? To say "**the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me**" is to say, very transparently, "I am the Messiah"; because "messiah" in Hebrew, rendered "christ" (*Christos*) in Greek, means precisely this—one who is anointed with the Spirit of God, one who is a vehicle for the Holy Spirit. We are not talking about just any prophet or king or priest, who were all anointed as "messiahs"; this is *the* Messiah, the Christ announced by the many prophecies of Isaiah: "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa 11: 2); "Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights: I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isa 42:1).

"**The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me**"—and all of a sudden the sermon in the Nazareth synagogue look nothing like "same old, same old." Very soon, the worshippers who had been happy to see him pay a visit to his home town of Nazareth, and who "spoke well of Him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" turned against him. In the end, as is written just a few verses later,

"when the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill ... to hurl him down headlong."

As we begin the new Church year, let us remember that we are His disciples, called to respond to the word proclaimed in the Gospel, to receive the Holy Spirit, and to manifest Christ to the world.

A NOTE ON THE CHURCH NEW YEAR AND THE VIRGIN MARY

On January 1 the Orthodox Church celebrates the Lord's Circumcision and commemorates Saint Basil the Great. Why no mention of the New Year? Because the Church's calendar, inherited from the ancient Jerusalem Temple, counts September as the first month of its New Year. Since Byzantine times, September 1 is counted as the ecclesiastical New Year.

It appears, then, that the Church begins its annual cycle of feasts with the birth of Mary, the Theotokos (September 8) and ends it with her death and translation to everlasting life (August 15). This is neither an accident, nor an arbitrary decision of the Church. Rather, it reflects the Christian view that the Mother of God reflects, in her person, the very nature of the Church: Virgin and Birthgiver of God. A learned monk of the Orthodox Church in America, Fr. Calinic Berger, summarizes our faith very aptly:

The Orthodox approach to the Mother of God remains what it ought to be: warm, filled with love and devotion, yet sober. She is a human being like all of us, and yet she lives such a life. She dies our death because she shares our birth. She was not conceived 'immaculately' in a manner unique and different from all of us; she was not given a special nature, incapable of sin. Neither did she avoid death. Therefore, it was within fallen nature that the Virgin Mary achieved her spiritual perfection. What she did in her life, she did not do in a mechanical, impersonal manner, but with struggle, thereby developing her own personal holiness through her role as the Mother of God. Not only did she live well, but she finished well: she crowned her struggle of spiritual perfection and her unique role as Mother of God with a godly death in the presence of Christ and supremely 'painless, blameless, and peaceful'. The Mother of God is thus a model for all Christians, both in the way she lived and in the way she died.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Sunday, 9/ 15, 10 AM: Pan-Orthodox Liturgy and Picnic** at Alameda Park (Odd Fellows Pavilion).
- Many thanks to everyone involved in the Great Cleanup that has been underway the last two weeks! This was a long-needed cleanup, which was also necessary so that we can set up the office in its new location (the choir loft) and create a parish library with a large book display.

Remember in your prayer

LIVING: Maria Liras (Stella's sister), who is about to pass from this life; Fr. Paisius (recovering from surgery); Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin (recovering from illness and surgery); Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Charitini; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Dollie; Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; Kent, Bob, David (relatives of Jean); Stelian; Diane; Maura (Andronic); Susannah.

DEPARTED: Sula; Kurt (Diane's son); Viorica; Norma; Miltiades; Tim (Becker); Silviu; Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham); Bill (Thomas); Marta.